

BOOK REVIEWS



"THE CASE AGAINST HOSPITAL NURSES"

NURSES who are in danger of becoming inflated by too good an opinion of themselves are advised by all means to read an article called "The Case Against Hospital Nurses" in the *Nineteenth Century* for April by a Miss Johnstone. If after rising from a perusal of her indictment they can find any words except the meek appeal, "Please excuse me for living," then we fear that, indeed, Moses and the prophets would warn them in vain!

However, let us not treat Miss Johnstone with levity. She says that nurses *as a class* are a trial in a house, dreaded by the family who has to have them. She calls them "offensive in their general behavior," "unsympathetic," "indifferent" to suffering, and in the hour of death "callous" even to "brutality." She insists that these characteristics belong to the whole profession, and only allows that there may be a few exceptions. She explains some of these defects in nurses by assuming that in their hospital training they receive "harsh, if not brutal," treatment; that they work under such conditions that they are bound to deteriorate, and that no one cares if they do deteriorate; that, in fact, no one cares about their personal character if they do their work, etc., etc. Miss Johnstone admits incidentally that nurses do their work well, effect marvellous cures, and save many lives; this, however, is a grudging admission, and it is not a thing that they are to place to their credit,—not by any means to be weighed in the balance against their general unpleasantness! The entire article is a wholesale hash of indiscriminating assertion. No proofs whatever, no evidence, no illustrations does she condescend to present by which to fortify her position. It is singularly lacking in that careful exactness and discrimination in statement which nurses are taught as the first essential of the scientific accuracy needed in their work. In fact, the article has every mark of being "written to order," and *Nursing Notes* has this comment:

"This is not the first time that the editor of the *Nineteenth Century* has admitted to its pages an attack upon nurses. We remember many years ago the part played by this journal in the time of a hospital crisis, when the publication of an article by Miss Lonsdale concerning the nursing department at Guy's Hospital, then being slowly reorganized, put back the clock of nursing reform, not merely at Guy's, but throughout the nursing world, for at least ten years."

The English nursing journals all have notices of the article, and take the same tone that we would take: that while we do not claim to be perfect, we resent a wholesale charge of being worse than we really are. Miss Isla Stewart and Mr. Sydney Holland had articles in the following issue of the *Nineteenth Century* showing the injustice and limited knowledge of Miss Johnstone. Mr. Holland defended the nurse chivalrously, as his wont is, and Miss Stewart with excellent temper and strong sense pointed out the glaring errors Miss Johnstone makes. She refers to the training in hospital, and says, what every woman in a hospital position has noticed, that the majority of pupils develop under their training into "upright, conscientious, self-respecting women, ready and fit to

take their place in the world as respected citizens," and she maintains that nurses are, "for the most part, hard-working, womanly women, with the faults that belong to other women, but with the better part of their nature and character developed and strengthened by contact with much suffering, the exercise of much self-denial, and a cheerful submission to duty."

The insinuation of hard-heartedness is no new one to nurses. Have we not all felt indignant at having some unthinking laywoman of the Miss Johnstone type say to us, "Oh, I don't see how you can bear to do all these things; now, I am so tender-hearted that I can't endure the sight of pain."

Meantime, as the public swallows every supply of nurses and ever demands more, we may cheer up, and hope that everyone has not so bad an opinion of us as Miss Johnstone.



CHICAGO HOSPITAL SCHOOL.—From *Charities* we quote the following:

"An experiment that is predicted to be of much value scientifically is a series of investigations as to the effect of certain foods on the physical and mental development of children, and now being conducted at the Chicago Hospital School for Nervous and Delicate Children.

"These investigations will probably cover a period of from one to five years, the main purpose of the research being to formulate, if possible, a dietary for children of from five to fifteen years.

"Foods are prepared according to certain prescribed recipes, and the children are permitted to eat sparingly or generously, whichever they choose. All foods are analyzed before cooking. After cooking, each child is served with carefully weighed portions best suited to his individual tastes, need, and capacity. The uneaten portion is weighed so as to get accurately the amount of food consumed.

"Each day the urine and fæces are carefully analyzed by medical men, and the accompanying mental and physical expressions are carefully watched and daily recorded to show deviations from normal. Special teachers and trained nurses make these observations.

"The hospital school was founded two years ago, and serves as a pædological laboratory for the University of Chicago.

"A limited number of children are taken, fourteen now being in residence at the school. Children from all parts of the United States have been sent to the school for medical and educational care.

"The Board of Trustees are planning to have an ideal hospital building for children, with special provision for educational work.

"The University of Chicago is the only university in the world that has a working pædological laboratory where the physical care,—hygiene, diseases of children, etc., with accompanying mental conditions, may be studied and watched."